

NORTHERN IRELAND -



THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY!

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FOREWORD

This document was first prepared in February of this year when two hundred copies were printed.

All relevant personalities, parties and movements in these islands were circularised, but without response.

In July the document was updated in the light of prevailing circumstances and presented in pamphlet form.

It was distributed as in February, but again without obvious effect.

In this second edition four hundred copies were printed.

Since then some 23 people have died and time is running out.

There is no satisfaction in being a prophet in a wilderness; those who failed to act are equally culpable in the perpetration of violence.

Consequently

this third edition runs to 20,000 copies and is intended for general publication.

N. DERRY C.R.A. AUGUST 13. 1971

FOREWARD (to the second edition)

The following position paper was prepared at the request of the North Derry Civil Rights Association Executive Committee as an expression of an understanding of the current Northern Ireland Situation.

Such an analysis necessarily involves a consideration of the relevant causative factors in the past; lines of further evolution consistent with the logic of the situation are indicated.

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The events of August 1969 conclusively discredited the institutions and structure of the Northern Ireland state in the eyes of its non-Unionist citizens. Local and central government, judiciary and police all proved unable to defend, not just the liberties of the citizen, but even the basic safety of his person and property. This judgement of condemnation was confirmed by Westminster, and by Irish, British and world public opinion. Nonetheless, there was a consensus on an attempt to rebuild; with person and property safeguarded by British troops, the programme specified by the then Home Secretary at Westminster, Mr. Callaghan, was received with general favour.

The current situation stands in sharp contrast. Among those whom the British troops were sent to protect, there is a sullen suspicion and resentment: the Callaghan proposals are referred to with open cynicism; death and destruction are almost casually accepted; and several hundred citizens are imprisoned for opposition to the structures of the state, however expressed. There is no longer a consensus on an attempt to rebuild. However reluctantly, it is necessary to examine the evolution of this situation if progress towards a solution is to be made.

In the first days of Westminster intervention it was understood that the troops on the streets were there primarily to protect the individual citizen, with impartiality. Mr. Quintin Hogg (now Lord Hailsham) expressed this admirably at the Conservative Party Conference in Brighton on 8th October 1969 - "It is not possible for British regular forces to be policeman, but these troops are not enforcing law and order - they are keeping the peace, which is not the same thing". He went on to recognise two distinct cultural elements within the Northern Ireland social structure, the 'Irish' and the 'British'. The legitimacy of each aspiration, peacefully pursued, and the imperative that each evolve freely within society, were objectively noted in Mr. Hogg's speech. Such was the basis of the bipartisan parliamentary stand at Westminster, with recognition from responsible commentators (e.g. Leonard Beaton, "The Times", 20th August 1969). As a token of this open impartiality, British authority, civil and military, entered into a close liaison with recognised leaders of the distinct elements in the Northern Ireland community. For several months violence was absent from the streets.

The first cause for doubt on the part of the minority community was the failure of the new Conservative government, following the 1970 election, to confirm in the Home Office Mr. Hogg, who was so clearly identified with the policy of conciliation. Military operations in Belfast in July 1970, involving death and injury to civilians, were interpreted as politically inspired, in an attempt to reinforce the credibility of the current Stormont cabinet in the eyes of its more extreme Orange supporters, whose lack of confidence in it became more apparent as their 12th July festival approached. Distrust of the military command increased with its unilateral withdrawal of liaison from citizens' groups in minority areas, together with troop deployment in districts, urban and rural, hitherto peaceful. Only at this stage did the operations of Republican militants become significant; support for their activities was (and is) directly related to disillusionment with the British forces. To date, there has been no attempt to reverse the resultant mutual escalation, and the militarisation of life throughout the Six Counties has proceeded. Even more ominous is the conditioning of the private soldier to regard one section of the population as hostile, as happens when patrols are sent nightly through the streets in 'sneakers' and with blackened faces, not to mention the activities of the officers at military briefings. (See "Spectator", 15th May and 29th May 1971, for a discussion of material issued by 'army sources').

On the political front, despair deepened with the visit to Northern Ireland in Spring 1971 of Mr. Reginald Maudling, as British Home Secretary. On his own admission, he did not know what was intended when a "political initiative" was called for; rather, he promised only a "long haul" using current methods whose failure, evident then, has been conclusively demonstrated now. Current official pronouncements presuppose the permanence of the present administrative structure, while the army now refers to its role as "action in aid of the civil power" or "upholding lawful authority". The contrast with the words and intentions of Mr. Hogg as he expressed Conservative policy in 1969 is obvious, yet both parties at Westminster calmly assert that there has been no policy change. A further alienation from parliamentary structures among citizens in Northern Ireland inevitably follows. The Opposition withdrawal from Stormont, the sequel to further civilian fatalities, merely confirms this judgement.

There may well have been no policy decision at Westminster, despite the obvious change indicated above. Such a decision is now called for; and it will come, either as a result of residual goodwill now, or as a consequence of conflict later. So much is evident. It is already advocated in the press in the U.K. by John Whale in the "Sunday Times" (May 1971), by Leslie Mallory in the "Spectator" (17th July 1971), and others. Even military men, including Generals Freeland and Tuzo, speaking out of their Northern Ireland experience, have indicated such an understanding.

The necessary political solution will be achieved by negotiation among all the parties concerned, the Dublin and London governments and the two Northern Ireland communities; it cannot be a prescription from any one or more of these, as the original partition settlement and the Callaghan proposals were. It is in this context that the "alternative assembly" proposed by the minority representatives on their withdrawal from Stormont can come into its own. As a splintered opposition within one parliament engaged in tripartite talks, their role and influence would be minimal; as a clear and distinct bloc, with a consistent policy and speaking for the community they represent, they must be given due weight when four elements are identified as relevant to a settlement. Their priority task now must be to formulate their contribution to such a settlement, and then mobilise their community in support of the formula so evolved.

It would appear necessary at this stage to indicate lines along which a settlement might be developed. As already stated, the legitimate aspirations of all citizens must be given scope for expression and realisation within a free society. Therefore an all Ireland unitary state, or a rigid adherence to a partitionist position, are equally unattainable in peace. As an alternative, a Council for Ireland would seem viable, leaving legislative authority in the hands of the present territorial assemblies. The arrangement could be made subject to revision by agreement in the light of experience after a fixed period, perhaps with a gradual transfer of executive powers as the Council grows in stature and acceptance. With adequate finance, an authoritative consultative voice in all legislation and administration, and due representation of all sections of opinion throughout the Island, such a Council would provide an

effective guarantee of the safety and liberty of each minority group. It could well assume from the outset the responsibilities of the Commissioner for Complaints, the Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) and the Ministry of Community Relations, together with analogous functions in the Republic of Ireland. The comments of the New Ulster Movement with regard to reform of the territorial assemblies, and particularly the adoption of Proportional Representation for all voting procedures, are worthy of attention and a wide measure of acceptance. (N.U.M. Publication, "The Reform of Stormont", June 1971), The committee system also could be extended to cover all functions of administration, including finance and security. The Republic of Ireland might see fit to concede equality of representation on the Council for Ireland to Northern Ireland representatives, despite the population imbalance, due to the particularly acute nature of the problems to be faced by the Council in the Northern context.

A preparedness to discuss these possibilities would be a welcome token of goodwill on all sides at the moment; how much more desirable this would be than to have face the same problems in an atmosphere of recrimination following further bloodshed.
